

Comp. EmuSOURCE: THE 'TLITANT,
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America (Opposition),
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(We are glad to print the following interview given in Prinkipo by Leon Trotsky to comrade B. J. Field in connection with an article published several months ago by a bourgeois apologist for the Stalinist regime. As the interview deals with questions of more than passing interest, it retains all its value as an exposition of the Bolshevik-Leninist standpoint on questions in dispute in the Communist movement.—Ed.)

Lenin and Socialism in One Country

In the question of the united front as well as in all the broad questions of revolutionary strategy and tactics, the Left Opposition regards itself as continuing the authentic Bolshevik line, as against the efforts of the Stalinist faction to revise it in an empirical and bureaucratic manner.

This sense of the continuity of the revolutionary tradition runs clearly through the answers which Trotsky gave to the writer's questions on the issues of principle which Mr. Fischer, following the Stalinists, takes for granted as having been decided against Trotsky's views.

Here are his answers:

Question: "Lenin and all his followers were convinced at that time (in 1917) that only a revolution abroad could save them from certain doom They did not hope to survive unless revolutions in Europe and Asia weakened external hostility and gave Red Russia a breathing space for domestic entrenchment", says Mr. Fischer. Was Lenin speaking only in an immediate military and political sense of saving Russia from defeat and subjugation, or did he have in mind the whole perspective of Russia's developing on its own soil through the dictatorship of the proletariat to the ultimate Communist goal?"

Trotsky—"That affirmation of Mr. Fischer's, like a series of others, proves his lack of familiarity with the theory and the history of Bolshevism. In 1917 there was not a single Bolshevik who considered possible the realization of a socialist society in a single country, and least of all in Russia. In the appendix to my 'History of the Russian Revolution' I give a detailed and documented study of the ideas of the Bolshevik party on the October revolution. This study, I hope, will make it impossible in the future to ascribe to Lenin

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the theory of Socialism in a single country. Here I will limit myself to a single quotation, which in my opinion has a decisive character, Lenin died in January, 1924; three months later Stalin expounded in writing Lenin's conception of the proletarian revolution. I quote word for word: '. . . to overthrow the power of the bourgeoisie and to establish the power of the proletariat in one country, still does not signify the full victory of Socialism. The main task of Socialism--the organization of Socialist production--remains still in the future. Is it possible to fulfill this task, is it possible to achieve the definite victory of Socialism in one country without the combined efforts of the proletarians of several advanced countries? No, it is impossible. For the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, the efforts of one country are sufficient--for this we have the testimony of the history of our revolution. For the definitive victory of Socialism, for the organization of Socialist production, the efforts of one country, especially of a peasant country like Russia are insufficient--for that are required the efforts of the proletarians of several advanced countries. . . .' Stalin closes the exposition of these ideas with the words, 'Such are in general the characteristic features of Lenin's conception of the proletarian revolution' (Problems of Leninism, emphasis mine).

"Only in the Fall of 1924 did Stalin discover that it is especially Russia, as distinguished from other countries, which can by its own forces build up a socialist society. '. . . After having established its power and assumed the leadership of the peasantry', he wrote in a new edition of the same work, 'the victorious proletariat can and must build up socialist society.' Can and must! The proclamation of this new conception is closed by the same words, 'Such are in general the characteristic features of Lenin's conception of the proletarian revolution'. In the course of a single year Stalin ascribed to Lenin two directly opposed conceptions of the fundamental question of socialism. The first version represents the real tradition of the party; the second took shape in Stalin's mind only after the death of Lenin, in the course of the struggle against 'Trotskyism'."

Question: "Is there reason to believe that the world revolution, or a series of social upheavals on the Eurasian continent, 'ceased to be an immediate possibility' by 1921?"

Answer: "What shall we call an 'immediate possibility'? In 1923 the situation in Germany was profoundly revolutionary, but what was lacking for a victorious revolution was a correct strategy. At that time, I wrote a study about this question, 'The Lessons of October', which served as a pretext for my elimination from the government. In 1925-27 the revolution in China was destroyed by the false revolutionary

strategy

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strategy of the Stalinist faction. To this last question I consecrate my book, 'Problems of the Chinese Revolution' (issued by the Pioneer Publishers, New York, 1932). It is quite clear that the German and Chinese revolutions in case of victory would have changed the face of Europe and Asia, and perhaps of the whole world. Once again, he who ignores the problems of revolutionary strategy would do better not to talk about revolutions at all."

Question: "Is it true that 'a revolution germinates only in national soil, that it does not result from imported money or pamphlets or agitators, and that the capitalists will do more than the Communists to undermine capitalism'? Is it true that 'by its very existence a truly Soviet, near-Socialist system . . . must further the cause of revolution in other countries', and that 'a strong Socialist Soviet Union is the most effective stimulus to world revolution'?"

Answer: "The statements quoted in this question contradict each other. That the existence of the Soviet Union has an international revolutionary significance is a commonplace equally recognized by friends and foes. In spite of the existence of the Soviet Union, however, the proletarian revolution during the past years has not recorded a victory in any other country. In Russia itself the proletariat conquered in spite of the fact that there was no Soviet State in existence at the time elsewhere. For the victory are necessary, not only certain objective conditions, internal as well as external, but also certain subjective factors--the Party, the leadership, the strategy. Our differences with Stalin are entirely of a strategical character. Suffice it to say that if we had carried through, in 1917, the policy of Stalin, the Soviet State would not be in existence today. It is therefore not true that the mere existence of the Soviet Union is capable of assuring the victory of the revolution in other countries. But it is also false that the revolution ripens and comes to development only in the national soil. Otherwise what purpose is served by the Communist International?"

Question: "Granting that a capitalist economy, the more highly it is developed, becomes the more dependent on other countries, is it less true of the Soviet Union, because it is developing toward a Socialist economy?"

Answer: "National self-sufficiency or 'autarchy' is the ideal of Hitler, not of Marx and Lenin. Socialist economy cannot reject the huge advantages of the world division of labor: on the contrary, it will carry it to the highest development. But in practise, it is not a question of the future socialist society, with an established internal equilibrium, but of the given technically and culturally backward country which in the interests of industrialization and collectivization is forced to export as much as possible in order to import as much as possible."

Question:

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Question: "Is it true that the theory of the permanent revolution, which is the platform on which you have fought Stalin since 1924, was 'born in a time of Bolshevik mental depression' caused by a series of failures both at home and abroad', or does this theory represent a consistent line found in all your 'political writings and actions after 1903'---Mr. Fischer makes both statements".

Answer: "The theory of the permanent revolution, in contradiction to the theory of socialism in one country, was recognized by the entire Bolshevik party during the period from 1917 to 1923. Only the defeat of the proletariat in Germany in 1923 gave the decisive push to the creation of Stalin's theory of national socialism: the downward curve of the revolution gave rise to Stalinism, not to the theory of the permanent revolution, which was first formulated by me in 1905. This theory is not bound to a definite calendar of revolutionary events; it only reveals the world-wide interdependence of the revolutionary process."

Question: "The statement is made that 'Trotsky would not have neglected Soviet home industry any more than Stalin would ignore the usefulness of the Third International'. Do you agree with the conclusion that 'there are no whites and blacks in this picture. It is a matter of proportion and shade'?"

Answer: "Such an affirmation is possible only because of lack of familiarity with the history of the struggle between the Stalinist faction and the Left Opposition. The initiative of the Five Year Plan and of the accelerated collectivization belongs entirely to the Left Opposition, in uninterrupted and sharp struggles with the Stalinists. Not having the possibility of occupying myself here with long historical researches, I will limit myself to a single illustration. The Dnieprostroy is considered with right as the highest achievement of Soviet industrialization. Yet Stalin and his followers, (Voroshilov, Molotov, and others) a few months before the beginning of the work were decided opponents of the Dnieprostroy plan. I quote from the stenographic report the words spoken by Stalin in April, 1927, in the Plenum of the Central Committee of the party against myself as chairman of the Dnieprostroy commission. There is talk of our constructing Dnieprostroy through our own means. The means needed are great, several hundred millions. Let us not get into the position of the peasant who, after accumulating a nest-egg, instead of repairing his plough and renewing his equipment, buys a gramophone and goes bankrupt." (Laughter) 'Can we ignore the decisions of the Party Congress that our industrial plans must be adapted to our resources? Yet comrade Trotsky openly ignores that decision of the Congress.' (Stenographic notes of the Plenum, page 110.)

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"Simultaneously the Left Opposition in the course of several years carried on a struggle against the Stalinists in favor of collectivization. Only when the kulak refused to deliver grain to the State did Stalin, under the pressure of the Left Opposition, accomplish a sharp turn. Being the empiricist that he is, he moved to the opposite extreme, and set as a task for two or three years the collectivization of all the peasantry, the liquidation of the kulaks as a class, and the compression of the Five Year Plan into four years. The Left Opposition declared that the new tempo of industrialization were above our forces and that the liquidation of the kulaks as a class in the course of three years was a fantastic task. If one wishes to say so, we find ourselves this time 'less radical' than the Stalinists. Revolutionary realism tries to draw the maximum advantage from every situation--that is what makes it revolutionary--but at the same time it does not permit us to set ourselves fantastic aims--that is what makes it realistic".

Question: "If we accept the views that the policy of Stalin has a purely empirical character, is determined by the circumstances of the moment and is incapable of seeing far ahead, how can we explain the victory of Stalin's faction over the Left Opposition?"

Answer: "Above, I emphasized the significance of revolutionary strategy. Here I must come back to the decisive importance of objective conditions. Without a correct strategy the victory is impossible. But even the most correct strategy cannot give the victory under unfavorable objective conditions. The revolution has its own laws: in the period of its culmination it pushes the most highly developed, determined and far-seeing stratum of the revolutionary class to the most advanced positions. Yet the proletariat has not only a vanguard, but also a rearguard, and besides the proletariat there are the peasantry and the bureaucracy. No one revolution up to now has brought all that was expected of it by the masses. Hence the inevitability of a certain disillusionment, of a lowering of the activity of the vanguard, and consequently, of the growing importance of the rearguard. Stalin's faction has raised itself on the wave of reaction against the October revolution. Look back at history--those who guided the revolution in the time of its culmination never kept their leading positions long after the turning point. In France, the leader of Jacobinism perished on the guillotine; with us, the change of leadership was achieved by means of arrest and banishment. The technique of the process is gentler, but its essence is the same."

Question: "How do you reconcile your criticism of the Soviet Union in the capitalist press with your revolutionary sympathies? Is it true that you are 'turning the thinking youth away from Russia', 'offering enemies of the Soviet regime the best possible arguments

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and material', and giving 'ex-radicals and near-Communists an excuse for maligning Moscow and abstaining from participation in revolutionary action'?"

Answer: "The Soviet State does not need either illusions or camouflage. It can claim only that world authority which is confirmed by the facts. The clearer and deeper the public opinion of the world, in the first instance the opinion of the working masses, will understand the contradictions and the difficulties of the socialist development of an isolated country, the higher will it appreciate the results achieved. The less it identifies the fundamental methods of Socialism with the zigzags and errors of the Soviet bureaucracy, the less will be the danger that, by the inevitable revelation of these errors and of their consequences, the authority, not only of the present ruling group, but of the workers' State itself, may decline. The Soviet Union needs thinking and critical friends, such as are capable not only of singing hymns in the hours of success, but of not shrinking in the hour of defeat and danger. Journalists of the type of Fischer accomplish a progressive work in defending the Soviet Union from calumnies, malicious inventions and prejudices. But these gentlemen overstep the limits of their mission when they attempt to give us lessons of devotion to the Soviet State. If we fear to speak of dangers, we shall never conquer them. If we close our eyes to the dark sides of the workers' State which we have helped to create, we shall never reach socialism."